M. KAPLAN DIARIES – TRANSCRIPTIONS (32) 1939 OCT 5 – 1940 JAN 3

Thursday, October 5, 1939

I find "The Good Fight" by R. L. Goldman extremely stimulating. Although the name of God isn't mentioned once throughout the book, it is entirely permeated by a sense for the spiritual. It plays wonderfully with the theological interest which has flared up in me of late.

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Sunday, October 8, 1939

One of the most difficult problems I have ever been confronted with in the matter of funeral eulogies was the one I was supposed to give last Wednesday at Ed's funeral. I could avail myself of the fact that traditional custom did not permit giving the customary funeral eulogy during the festival season. But I had to say something of a laudatory character. This has come so much a part of general expectation that I doubt whether it will be possible to abolish the practice of delivering eulogies at funerals. Sometimes I think that a service on the lines conducted by the Masons ought to be acceptable, but I have my doubts if our people will be contented. Moreover, there are cases where some kind of eulogy is in place. To discriminate would mean to give occasion for envy and injustice. The rabbi would not want to offend a rich member and would be strict in his application of the rule againsteulogies in the case of poor members.

But to come back to the problem of eulogizing Ed Rubin without saying anything that might be regarded as insincere. In trying to calm his son Harold who is the victim of some serious ailment, I heard him say that the one great ambition of his father was to maintain the good name of the Rubin firm. This was sufficient of a clue for me. I used that fact as a basis for appealing to the mourners to transcend the sense of loss the experienced in Ed Rubin's death. No matter how much his family and others suffered from his idiosyncracies,

they certainly experience a sense of loss, and the problem of transcending it was certainly a genuine one. This incident has taught me how much more one can get from live contact with human beings than from trying to spin out ideas from one's own brain.

Yesterday it was my turn to preach at the SAJ synagogue. The sermon I gave was the most successful of those I have delivered this year. It was based on the Haftarah Isaiah 42-43. The following is in substance what I said:

The "mission idea" developed by Reformism is not found in the Torah, nor even in the early Prophets. That fact does not indicate what's wrong with it. Before pointing out what's wrong with it we must understand the meaning of true religion for the dissemination of which God is supposed to have designated Israel.

True Religion makes men free

The criterion of what constitutes true religion is given in Is. 42 as being that which makes men free. We have there the forerunner of the famous New Testament statement (in John) about the truth making men free. In biblical days the antithesis of true religion was image worship. The question to be answered today is: what is the false religion from which true religion should emancipate us?

In the domain of the intellect there is the thraldom of the idolatry of nature. True religion is based on the primacy of the spirit. In self-awareness man has the means of mastering nature instead of being its bondman.

In the domain of the emotions there is thraldom of the idolatry of limited loyalties, in particular chauvinistic nationalism. The antithesis is the God of unlimited loyalty, of loyalty to loyalty (as Royce puts it.)

In the domain of the practical there is the thraldom of the idolatry of power. Salvation is with the God of righteousness. The difference between might being right and right being might is that illustrated by Hitler's present proposal to hold an international conference now that he has crushed Poland, whereas he had refused to join such a conference before he was in a position to dictate terms.

And now for the question of the mission. It is absurd to maintain that only the Jews are capable of appreciating the difference between true and false religion. The fact is that while a few exceptional poets and teachers understood that difference and dedicated themselves to the promulgation of true religion, the bulk of the Jews were not sufficiently appreciative of the difference between them to be regarded as its missionaries. The anonymous prophet himself says that more were so deaf and blind as those who should have been most keen in their sight and hearing. But the element of truth in the mission idea is that whereas other nations can manage to survive disaster because they have adequate means of survival, the Jews depend more than any other people upon commitment to the cause of true religion. Instead, however, of making the adoption and demonstration of true religion as a function of the Jew in the dispersion it were best to treat as the function of the resurgent Israel both in Palestine and in the diaspora.

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Monday, October 9, 1939

I believe that I have the right clue to a method of experiencing the reality of God in the idea that the belief in gods has its origin in the adjectival aspect of important, significant, indispensable by which certain objects, places, people, etc. are identified. They become the sancta of the tribe. The question is: what are the steps whereby man can come to have a truly objective conception of God?

God and Personality

The first step is that of personification which is itself a process that goes through various stages. When man begins to personify the objects which he regards as indispensable and therefore as holy (or endowed with mana-power that one must handle with care, etc.) he is still extravert. The child personifies the doll before it is conscious of itself as a person. When the human being matures racially and culturally he becomes aware of his own personality. The biblical statement of man's having been created in the image of God is historically more correct than the reverse, which is the usually accepted idea of the process in which the God-self relationship evolves. The fact is that man at first and for a long time regards the gods as more real and important than his own being. He is very little aware of the latter. The individual self is the latest stage in human development. Does it not seem then that pari passu with the crystallization of the conception of God there takes place the crystallization of the self? So long as human beings believe in gods which are merely the personification of the quality of indispensability, the self is identified with the body of the individual or is regarded as its ethereal double. With the rise of monotheism there necessarily arises a new conception of the self. The implications of the belief in the one God the creator of the world who governs it in righteousness evolve the conception of a self that regards itself as responsible for its conduct, etc. What happens when one's scientific approach to reality eliminates all need for assuming the existence of God? The tendency is to infer that the self too is nothing but an illusion and that there is nothing more to man than the physical and chemical forces that operate in him. Consciousness is a superfluous assumption, according to the behaviorists. Such a conclusion

is a reductio ad absurdum of the scientific approach to reality, which sees in it nothing but blind forces operating at random. The experience of self, which is too real and immediate to be denied should lead us to revise or at least to supplement the mechanistic conception of the universe.

The upshot of the foregoing reasoning is that God is that aspect of reality which gives rise to the fact and experience of personality in each of us.

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Tuesday, October 10, 1939

Yesterday afternoon I presided at the meeting of the Reconstructionist editorial board. The meeting began on time, was well attended, and no time was wasted on useless discussion. I dealt with the problem of article material by suggesting two things: 1) the need of working out a number of articles that would help to clarify the theological position of the Reconstructionist school of thought; 2) the advisability of having some of the sermons delivered by members of the Board written up in a 1000 word resume and published regularly in the magazine.

Alper repeated his contention that I had heard from him frequently at meetings before I had left for Palestine, namely that we aren't making the least dent on the Jewish masses. Evidently there was nothing that we could do with our limited resources to reach the masses. But even if we had the resources, we could not get very far so long as we have no plan or program that deals with the economic handicaps under which Jews labor. The discussion, however, did bring out the point that the magazine must be given the format that would be likely to increase its readability. Most people are used to reading only pre-digested stuff.

I have read through "Personality and Religion" by Brightman and have skimmed Knudson's "The Philosophy of Personalism" in the hope of finding in metaphysics a basis for systematic theology and of arriving at some formula that would define the relationship of theology to a historical religion like the Christian or the Jewish.

If supernatural revelation is accepted as a historic fact, the function of systematic theology would be 1) to establish the greater authenticity and authority of revelation which forms the basis of the particular historic religion one belongs to than that of the revelation upon which rival historical religions are based, and 2) to harmonize the contents of the authentic revelation with the contents of reason and experience. But if supernatural revelation as an event is precluded, the function of systematic theology should be 1) to indicate the meaning and function of religion in human life and 2) to reinterpret the traditional beliefs and practices of the historical religion to which one adheres in conformity with the general principles arrived in 1).

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Wednesday, October 11, 1939

This morning I received a letter from Rabbi Levitsky of Wilkes-Barre telling me of the course of five lectures he was planning on "five religious concepts which are vital in our American Democracy Today." He expects to see me today to get my advice on them. The five concepts he names are the following: The dignity of man, personal ethics, social justice, peace and the future of mankind. On the whole I think these concepts are exhaustive of what religion might contribute to democracy. Of course I would rule out personal ethics which probably refers to social relationships outside those in which an economic factor is involved. It is a very obscure and mis-

leading category. Instead I would suggesting "loving kindness." It is strange how rarely mention is made of "loving kindness" as integral to democracy. It should be especially stressed in view of the bad name given to it by Nietzsche's brilliant insanities.

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Thursday, October 12, 1939

The last couple of days I have been in a decidedly ironic mood. I attended to social and academic duties that I usually neglect and the resulting feeling is like that of attending punctually to letters that have to be answered. This reminds me of the letters from Prof. Torczyner and Epstein which are still on my conscience. I even took part yesterday in a meeting of the Rabbinical Assembly Executive Committee and was on smiling terms with everybody present -- even Basel and Finkelstein. I was in so conciliatory a frame of mind that I couldn't resist Simon Greenberg's and Levitsky's invitations to come out to speak before their communities. And to crown it all I delivered the opening address of the Friedlaender Classes with enough gusto to enable me to surmount the feeling that my day for public addresses is over.

I had worked out in my mind the main idea of what I was to say, but I lacked a point of contact with the audience. This necessitated my spending considerable time on how to begin my remarks. Fortunately the exercises begin with a short Hebrew song with the following words (p. 49)

I treated this text as representing the purpose for which they enrolled in the classes. It was easy from that point on to proceed with the statement of what they can get from the courses as a means of achieving that purpose. The means I mentioned were: 1) knowledge of what to believe; 2)a justifiable sense of pride in achievement of

our peopel; 3) direction as to what to do for Jewish life, With regard to the last item, I mentioned the method of "intensive cultivation" practiced in Palestine as the one which has to be resorted to everywhere. It is the method of getting the most out of the least.

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Friday, October 13, 1939

Last night 13 students of the 3rd and 4th year classes at the Seminary met at my office for the first session of the Seminar. The work will consist of discussion of reading assignments in recent works on the philosophy of religion. The first book to be taken up is Knudson's "Philosophy of Personalism." This is to be followed by Garnett's "Reality and Value."

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Sunday, October 15, 1939

Is there any significance to the fact that the Hebrews gave the plural form to the nouns for water and for life - (p.49) ?

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Monday, October 16, 1939

Saturday night Prof. & Mrs. Ginzberg visited with us. They had attempted to call on us the second Rosh Hashanah night but we were then with Judith and Ira.

I must say that I don't feel altogether at ease whenever I meet him socially. Being bookmen we should occasionally touch upon problems dealt with in books. Being instructors of young men who are being trained for the rabbinate, we ought sometimes discuss the prospects of Jewish life. Working in the same institution, we ought naturally to have something to say to each other about the way the institution is conducted. Yet all of these subjects are mentally ruled out by us as taboo, because we do not have a common language in which we could discuss them. So different are the universes of discourse in which the two of us live. Hence, when we get together once

in a while, I have to make conversation, as in the case of Buber. I don't understand why I should be the one to assume the task of preventing the conversation from coming to a halt. But somehow these people are so satisfied with themselves that they don't see any reason for keeping me entertained or informed. And so I make use of the Talmudic method of association of ideas of passing on from one subject to another that is cognate to it. And when I am through I feel as though a burden is off my mind.

Under circumstances such as the foregoing the conversation is as flat and insipid as a cold cup of overboiled coffee. Not a scintillating idea is elicited from me or escapes my interlocutor. The highest point reached in the conversation may be illustrated by the following two remarks of Ginzberg's. One was in reference to Ussishkin who when he came to this country said to Ginzberg (p.50) referring to the fact that when Ginzberg had been in Jerusalem in 1928-29 he had never visited Ussishkin. To this Ginzberg quoted himself as replying . The second remark was the one concerning his son Eli. Some one had asked Ginzberg whether he read his son's recent book. Ginzberg replied: Has Eli read my books?

The Ginzberg's were with us from 10 to 12. After they left us I started working on the talk I had been scheduled to give before the new Zionist group headed by Janowsky and Dinin. I had depended on material which I had written up in the last volume of this Journal dealing with the problem of nationhood (see Vol. VIII, pp. 258 sqq.) But when I read it over I found that it was very much in the raw. I was at first rather anxious, for fear that I might not have what to come with before the group, because I had to prepare for the hours that I was to teach on Sunday afternoon at the Institute. But

fortunately I managed to work out a pretty good talk on "The Implications of Zionism for American-Jewish Life" which I gave last night at the social hall of the SAJ.

The discussion which followed the talk elicited from me two or three important ideas. They were in answer to Duker's statement. One was that in making a virtue of necessity we do the wrong thing if we treat the necessity itself as a virtue. But we do the right thing if we make a virtue of the compensatory activity, principle or attitude called forth by the necessity. The fox who lost his tail made a wrong use of his necessity by advising his fellow foxes to cut off their tails. But if as a result of his experience he had learned how to grow back his own tail, that information would have had a value which would have put the "necessity" to good use. When the Reformists accept permanent dispersion of this as part of the divine purpose to have them make known the truth concerning Him, they make a wrong use of necessity. But I believe I am putting the "neceesity" of our situation to proper use when I suggest that it has enabled us to discover the true essence of nationhood as consisting not in a central state but in a common culture.

A second point was that unless we normalize the status of the Jewish group within the present framework of American political life, in the same way as the Catholic group does with the status of its members, we are certain to give our children a wrong mental twist and occasion for considerable inner conflict. This is the effect of "negating" the diaspora" advocated by Klatzkin, Kaufmann and to some extent even by Ahad Ha-Am.

Thirdly, we should not regard all attempts to reckon with the opinions of our neighbors as appeasement of anti-Semitism. We should disregard whatever emanates from ill-will and prejudice, but we cannot afford to ignore such well considered opinion as is formulated in or derived from the authoritative instruments of government.

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Tuesday, October 17, 1939

Today I started teaching at the Seminary. Instead of being able to devote the greater part of yesterday to preparing the lessons I was to give today, on Midrash and Homiletics, I had a number of appointments with people who came for advice and assistance and I had to think of what to say to the students of the Seminary who had invited me to a luncheon which they were to give in my honor today after the class. I spent three hours without finding a central idea. After a while as I was brushing my teeth the sought for idea popped up. It was the following: The difference between Jewish life in Palestine and that in America is that the former is characterized by physical insecurity and spiritual security, the latter is characterized by physical security and spiritual insecurity. Among the factors for spiritual security I stressed the University. There for the first time the Jewish people and not merely individual Jews were destined to make contributions to general civilization, in that whatever discoveries or creative achievements Jews would be responsible for would be the outcome of collective Jewish support and encouragement.

In spite of the lack of preparation specifically for the lessons in Midrash and Homiletics I had no difficulties in lecturing on both subjects. In the introductory remarks to the Midrash I elaborated on the sociological significance of tradition and its reinterpretation. In Homiletics I developed the point that no ethi-

cal or religious concept means anything apart from a particular time-space context. It is not possible therefore to reduce Judaism to a system of timeless or static concepts or ideals that have a positive meaning. In the sermon hour in Homiletics I pointed out the need of developing in each sermon a specific ethical or religious value of some kind before applying it to concrete situations. Today's sermon dealt with the concept of sacrifice; next week's will deal with group or national continuity; the one following with philosophy of history as characteristic of Judaism.

Then came the luncheon. Lena was with me. Silverstein, the secretary and Kazis the chairman of the student body, said some very flattering things about me. Finkelstein was also there and he too had kind words to say about me. What I had to say was well said. If I hadn't spent on it as much time as I did, I probably would have made a flop and have felt badly afterwards -- which is far worse than wasting a couple of hours. So all in all things have been running smoothly for me these last few days.

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Wednesday, October 18, 1939

I lunched today with Maurice J. Karpf and his wife. Karpf told me the story of the Graduate School for Jewish Social Work which he heads and which has been in financial difficulties since 1937. Then the two funds - the New York Foundation and one other the name of which I don't remember - gave notice that they would discontinue their annual contribution of $25,000 and $15,000 respectively toward the support of the school. The budget had amounted to $75,000. Felix Warburg contributed $10,000 annually. When the question arose that year whether a new class should be admitted, Warburg promised he would secure an additional $10,000 to make it possible for the new class to conclude its studies. To carry out his pledge he

wrote during the summer of 1937 while he was in Europe to his son Edward who had come into possession of money which, according to Karpf, he didn't know what to do with, that he should give $10,000 to the school. The son was very much annoyed that his father dictated to him, but he paid in the money anyhow. When in October of that year Warburg died, it became evident that unless some new resources were found the school would have to discontinue. In June, 1938 a number of Federation executives of different cities and their trustees met to consider what to do with the school. It looked as if the Federations would save the school when Frank Sulzberger, head of the Chicago Federation, made a vehement attack on the school as being a sheer waste. When in April 1938 a report was brought in by a committee of those who met in January the prospect for the continuance of the school was diminished although the report endorsed the school and recommended that the work be reorganized in view of the limited resources. In the meantime the Federations began to feel the added strain due to the overseas emergency relief which drained their income and were not inclined to contribute toward the maintenance of the school. Finally in the spring of this year the directors of the school decided to liquidate it.

Thanks to the efforts of Heder who got in touch with one Carl Pritz, a director of the Union Hebrew College, negotiations were begun before the summer to have the Graduate School become part of that College. This means that the College will make itself responsible for about $20,000 to $25,000 provided the Federations will come forward with a like amount.

To me this development is highly significant of the inevitable course which Jewish life in this country, if it is to survive, must take. It must synthesize the religious and social activities. It is too bad that this important synthesis is entrusted to the

Reformists who can hardly be expected to be fully aware of what they are doing. If they were they wouldn't do it. When Karpf asked Adler to have the Seminary take over the school Adler replied that the Hebrew Union College was the more logical institution because if the school were to become part of the Seminary it would be necessary to enforce the same rules about observances as those which the rabbinical students are expected to conform to, and this, he knew, was not feasible.

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Thursday, October 19, 1939

This morning I took part in one of the most interesting and constructive discussions of the problem of American-Jewish education I remember ever having attended. It was occasioned by Dushkin's calling together a number of Jewish educators who have very much in common ideology with him and with one another, due to their having been associated in the work for more than a quarter of a century. Besides Dushkin there were Benderly, Berkson, Golub, Chipkin, Dinin, Soltes, Edidin, Rosen and I. The purpose of Dushkin's calling us together was to thrash out the question raised by Berkson whether Dushkin's recommendations to the New York Board for Jewish Education under whose auspices he is to work were those most urgent at the present time. Those recommendations reckon with the two aspects of the problem 1) the need of improving the educational work now being conducted mainly through a system of supervision and experimentation and 2) the need of creating a communal base of support that will assure a future to Jewish education. According to Berkson this approach is the wrong one, because it misses the opportunity of using the new resources as a lever for carrying through what should be the main objective: a type of Jewish education that would reckon with the fact that we are living in a new age and environment. To that end it is essential to envisage the community not in terms of the lay leaders

entrusted with its improvement but in terms of a group like ours whose members are imbued with a creative ideal of Jewish life.

Both Dushkin and Berkson stated their case clearly and eloquently. Berkson rose at times to heights of eloquence. I was deeply moved by what he had to say. He spoke of the educational efforts inaugurated by Benderly as having constituted one chapter which is now concluded and of this new effort as the beginning of a second chapter. He pleaded, however, for what seemed to be a lost cause when he asked Dushkin to concentrate his efforts on revolutionizing the entire Jewish educational system. As proof that such an approach was feasible he mentioned the fact that men like Willen and Rosenman were enthusiastic about that part of his report which suggested the establishment of a model school that would try out a new type of Jewish education. He didn't realize that the kind of Jewish education that would satisfy them would be the one which was neither Jewishly national nor religious, but some wishy-washy ethical Americanism.

In the debste which followed everyone favored the Dushkin approach. It was touching to note in this reunion of our group with what selflessness Benderly, Chipkin and Berkscn discussed the plan worked out by Dushkin. For these men to cooperate with him in the spirit manifested this morning is an evidence that human nature can rise above the centrality of the ego.

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Saturday night, October 21, 1939

Last night we had Dr. & Mrs. Karpf for dinner. I learned from him that he had the lion's share in the reorganization of the Hebrew University in 1933-34. Hartog - the well known English educator - after a careful study of the administration of the University, sent a report of over 300 type written pages condemning the administration as highly inefficient and charging Magnes with

lying, in his desire to shield those responsible for mismanagement. I cannot believe any such thing about Magnes, but Karpf reiterated his statement to that effect. On top of Hartog's report was Prof. Frankel's from the standpoint of the Faculty, which likewise criticized severely Magnes' administration of the University's affairs. The two reports led Einstein and Weitzmann to send in their resignations as trustees. As a result came the reorganization of the University in which Karpf had a hand. According to Karpf, Weitzmann insisted that Kligler be asked to resign, but Karpf begged him off.

Later in the evening Karpf talked about his experiences in getting support for his school from the various Federations, now that it is to be amalgamated with the Hebrew Union College. He came with Morgenstein in the course of one of his trips to Pittsburgh. The executive director of the Federation, anticipating their visit,had invited the six graduates of the school who hold positions in Pittsburgh to tell him whether they felt they had gotten anything more out of the school by reason of its being Jewish than if they had attended only the New York School for Social Work. To this question two replied they got nothing, two weren't certain and two felt they did benefit from the schook but they couldn't say just what it was.

Karpf accounted for this negative reaction by pointing out 1) that it was understandable in case workers but would not have been the one which center workers would have given; 2) that as case workers they imbibed a good deal of hostility to what the school was trying to do from the institutions with which they worked. The psychiatrist, e.g. would ridicule the notion that cultural values and conflicts played any part in the social maladjustments and 3) that the students got their practical training not from the Graduate school but from the New York School. I tokd the Karpfs frankly that their own negative attitude toward the synagogue contributed to the students' negative reaction.

Arthur Rubin came to see me this afternoon. He would like me to answer in a sort of catechitaal fashion a number of theological questions he intends sending me. The answers should be threefold: 1) according to traditional Judaism of the naive type; 2) traditional Judaism of the philosophic type and 3) my answer.

He definitely holds to the medieval philosophic viewpoint as represented by Maimonides and Aquinas, according to which there is a sharp division between spirit and matter, between the creator and the creation. The former preceded in time the latter, and is different from it in essence. In contrast with this view is the one I stated to him as my own, n amely, that the distinction between the natural and supernatural was unknown to the naive believer, and was introduced by the philosopher. The philosopher resorted to that distinction not really because there is any genuine basis for assuming such a duality, but because it enabled him to give to his ignorance and inability to bridge the gulf between two aspects of reality the appearance of knowledge and understanding of reality. Ineatead, e.g. of admitting that he couldn't explain how the mind acted upon the body in terms of some intrinsic necessity, he resorted to the idea that they were so qualitatively different that there was no possibility of any mutual interaction between them. In making this observation I am probably stating in my own way Spinoza's reason for rejecting medieval dualism.

I have had a great deal of praise heaped on me this week on two occasions, at the reception given to me by the students on Tuesday and at the SAJ Seudah this afternoon. In addition I found myself sprawling big in the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Conventions 1933-1938. I am beginning to realize that people think much more of me than I do of myself. I find the awareness of this discrepancy quite uncomfortable.

I have been struggling the last few days with the problem of formulating the function of a modern Jewish theology. I shall have to fall back upon my old standby - this Journal - to help me formulate it.

Strange as it may sound, the fact is that the only way religion will ever again become a vital force in human life is through the development of theology. As matters stand now the average person tends to fight shy of religion, but he at least respects it and has a secret admiration for those who enjoy it or feel a genuine need for it. The case is otherwise with theology. Theology is at least assumed to be a special intellectual discipline for ecclesiastics or clergymen, and to constitute the least significant aspect of their functioning. It is supposed to entangle them in a lot of finely spun reasonings which in the last analysis are little more than logomachis and word juggleries. Nothing, therefore, would seem more absurd than to make the revival of religion depend upon a renewal of interest in theology.

With all that I venture to maintain that theology is an indispensable means to the revival of religion. The apparent absurdity of this proposition would be dispelled, if we only realized that theology need no more be identified exclusively with medieval discussions like the one about the number of angels that could manage to stand on the point of aneedle than astronomy need be identified exclusively with the medley of empirical observations of the heavens utilized as a basis of astrological forecasts. There is hardly a science that did not have its crude beginnings when blind guesses did service for careful observation, and words were mistaken formalities. But to the extent that there was present in all of them the urge to reckon with the demand of reason they have emancipated themselves from the hampering influence of irrationalism that clung to

them, and they have contributed to a better understanding of the world we live in. Theology is nothing more nor less than the application of reason to religion. Such application is needed whenever religion is regarded as not functioning properly or whenever it tends to become entirely defunct, and thereafter to keep religion from relapsing into either abnormal state.

It is apparent that in order to realize the importance of theology for religion it is necessary to have a clear understanding of religion as an element of human experience. Insofar as such an understanding calls for an orderly and systematic approach to the various manifestations of human life which go by the name of religion, we find ourselves meritably involved in theological discussion when we try to set forth the function of theology.

The first fact worthy of note in any attempt to understand religion is that like language it exists in the form of specific religions. At first this appears to be a truism. Yet it is perhaps the most difficult fact to negotiate in our efforts to understand religion or to deal with it intelligently. We either assume that there can be only one true religion, and therefore that all the other religions are called such merely as a matter of courtesy when actually they are superstitions or we imagine that underlying all so called religions there is the reality of religions, which is overlaid with various kinds of extraneous content. In all traditional theologies or rational approaches which were in vogue in the past, this was the way thinkers regarded religion, namely, as one and not as many. In starting out with the contrary assumption that religion is inherently many and each fully worthy of the name, we seem to be begging what is perhaps the most important question. That is in a sense true. The only reply we can make is that we must strive to watch our step from this point on so as to take nothing further for granted and be justified in the end by an inner consistency which only this initial assumption makes possible.

Assuming then that religion is many, we try to identify the manifestations which are common to the various religions. Those manifestations will not necessarily constitute that essence which theologians formerly were in search of when they hoped to discover the basic truth of all religions. They will constitute only the plasma, the basic substance out of which religious experience in all its multitude of forms is moulded. They are not the product of reasoned or even conscious effort of the mind, though they are the material to which reason is later applied and without which religion would be contentless.

These elements with which all religions begin are sancta, i.e. objects either natural or artificial, animate or inanimate, human beings and localities which are treated as being holy or sacred.

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Sunday, October 29, 1939

Last Sunday Harry Bachrach, the husband of Vivien, my niece by marriage, died. Though at one time he seemed apparently able in business, he lost everything he had had. In addition about a year and a half ago he swallowed a fishbone and it penetrated his lung. Though the surgical operation was successful he never recovered completely and before long developed cancer which hastened his death. Both he and Vivian bore their sufferings with a remarkable degree of stoicism. I wonder what contributed to this attitude of theirs. Perhaps because they had joy from their two children. Another factor may have been Harry's ignorance of the true nature of his disease -- an ignorance which nowadays seems inexplicable. When I saw him two weeks before he died, he looked as though he had lain in a grave for years, so decimated he was. Yet he never intimated that he was aware he was on his death bed.

It was a lucky thing because otherwise I would not have known how to eulogize Harry, that I visited the family as soon as I learned of Harry's death. Vivian who had ended her long vigil of devoted care expressed aptly what he had meant to her. His was not a dramatic personality, she said, but it was a wholesome personality. Whether she wanted me to convey this thought in my eulogy of him, or it was her spontaneous evaluation of his character, I cannot tell. But it furnished me the clue which I needed in formulating my eulogy.

I have been reading Henry Rosenthal's dissertation which he wrote for the doctorate, because I am one of the examiners and have to be present at his final examination next Thursday. His hypothessi is: Religion is the central art in culture for the control of the emotional system. It is thought through with great precision and written up in his characteristic vigorous style. It confirmed me to such a degree in my own long held conclusion that it is meaningless and futile to foster Jewish religion in this country without organizing Jewish life for the purpose of fostering Jewish culture or civilization, that I have been very much depressed the last few days. It brought home to me once again in forcible fashion how blind and stupid are the Adlers, the Morgensterns and the Finkelsteins who either can't or won't see the truth.

The reading of Rosenthal's dissertation stimulated my own thinking on the function of religion. Whatever is to be the fate of the Jewish people here in America, religion will have a place in human life. I am beginning to feel that unless I am prepared to inaugurate a campaign for communal organization on a large spectacular scale I ought to concentrate on the subject of religion in general.

Religion includes three types of experience: 1) mystical, 2) metaphysical and 3) ethical. The function of mystical experience is to help us overcome the sense of impotence in the face of the destructive force of nature; 2) metaphysical experience is a means of overcoming the sense of meaningless of life in that it helps us identify the fact of creativity and freedom and 3) the function of ethical experience is to help us deal with the fact of insatiability of the desires.

* * *

Tuesday, October 31, 1939

Last night services were held in memory of Israel Davidson. Finkelstein presided and those who spoke were Ginzberg, Hendricks, Kazis and Arzt, representing respectively the Faculty, the Trustees, the students and the Alumni. The exercises were carried through with dignity.

Today at lunch Boaz Cohen sat at the same table with me at lunch in the Seminary cafeteria. We naturally got to talking about the memorial exercises. This led him to say many things about Davidson which did not do the latter's memory any credit. According to Cohen, Davidson was a sypersensitive man who suffered from a sense of inferiority. Once he took a dislike to anyone there was no way of breaking down his antipathy. Boaz Cohen mentioned the incident of his having worked out a bibliography of Davidson's writings and coming to present it to him on his 60th anniversary. Cohen did this at Marx's and Finkelstein's suggestion, in order to break down the ill-will which Davidson had borne against him for no good reason. The greeting which Cohen got was "I am not dead yet."

According to Cohen it was this sense of inferiority that drove Davidson to work on incessantly so as to make up in quantity what he lacked in quality. His bete noir was Ginzberg. He always imagined that the students treated him as inferior to Ginzberg. Although he received more public recognition than did Ginzberg, he was always unhappy and he let out on those students whom he could afford to victimize.

What a difference between the public and the private character of celebrated people!

The Seminary students got somewhat on my nerves in class today. In their eagerness to reduce the load of their work they began bargaining with me about the sermon outlines which I expect from them. I confess that the more I get to know them the more I feel that they look upon the rabbinate as chiefly a means of earning a livelihood and only secondarily as a means of enabling the Jewish people to live and function healthily.

I felt compensated, however, for the foregoing annoyance by the following thoughts I developed in class: The articles on Midrash and Midrash Aggadah in the Encyclopedia fail to emphasize the true significance of Midrash when they treat it as constituting the spirit of the text. In reality the Midrash is a reinterpretation of the text.

The Midrash Aggadah should be regarded as theology. The reason there is no dividing line between Tannaim and Amoraim in Aggadah as in Halakah is that theology in Judaism is not treated as authoritative in the way it is in Christianity. The reason theology came to be authoritative in Christianity is that having started as a volunteer movement principles of faith had to be formulated and

adherence to them set up as requirements for admission, whereas one was born into Judaism. Moreover the fact that among the fathers of the Church were many who had come under the influence of Greek philosophy had to insist upon exactitude in the formulation of the faith so that there was as little freedom in Christian theology as in Jewish Halakah.

In the absenceof a concept of natural law to express the orderliness which obtains in the physical world, the concept of Torah or divinely revealed law functioned for the Sages as a means of accounting for that orderliness. In modern thinking the reverse is true. With natural law as an assumed fact and with revealed law subject to doubt, religionists extend the idea of natural law into the spiritual world and the Orthodox e.g. treat the Torah as an embodiment of that extension. If the latter were to write Midrash-Aggadah they would say God looked at the laws which are the foundation of the world and wrote His Torah for Israel in keeping with them.

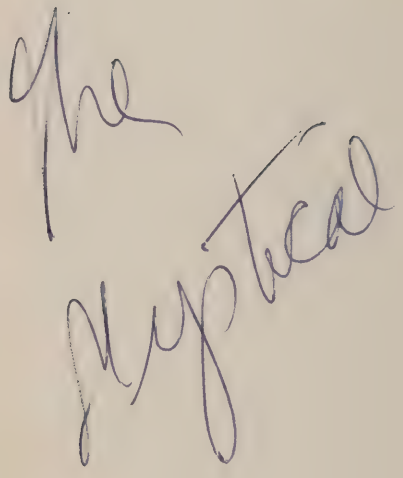
I think I have finally gotten the outline of the lecture I am scheduled to give next week at Providence and which I expect to repeat the week following at Philadelphia. Here it is:

The Jewish Religion of Tomorrow

Introd. The Jewish religion is not coextensive with Judaism. The latter includes the entire context of Jewish life, its culture, organization and institutions. The Jewish religion refers specifically to that element in Judaism which has to do with the idea of God.

Jewish religion will have a tomorrow only if Jewish civilization will have a tomorrow, i.e. if there will be a center of Jewish life in Palestine and a communal Jewish life in America.

On the other hand Jewish civilization will have a tomorrow provided it will have not merely religion but true religion.


The
Mystical

The conviction which Jews had that their religion was truer than those of the other peoples kept Judaism and the Jewish people alive.

In ancient times it was not difficult to distinguish between true and false religion. Polytheism, worship of subhuman beings and of inanimated symbols, exaltation of rites over morals.

For our day we need a criterion to help us distinguish the one from the other. Such a criterion is offered us by the prophet: to open men's eyes to the truth which should set them free.

To apply that criterion to religion it is necessary to deal separately with each of its three aspects 1) the mystic; 2) the metaphysical and 3) the ethical.

The function of the mystic aspect of religion is to help us adjust to the destructive forces which are beyond control and retain the willingness to live under the most difficult circumstances. That aspect can be dealt with in a manner that is enslaving - viz: theurgy and magic or in a manner that is liberating viz; union with the ground principle of being. Such adjustment takes the form of resignation, trust in God, faith.

The function of the metaphysical aspect of religion is to orient us to the universe by helping us to get at the nature of reality. The false orientation is the fatalistic of ancient times (including other worldliness) or the materialistic-mechanistic of our day. The true one is that which leaves room for freedom, initiative and human responsibility.

The function of the ethical aspect is to help us bring under control our insatiable desires. The false method is that of some limited type of loyalty, the true one of loyalty to the greatest good of the greatest number, inrrespective of race, color or creed.

I confess to a sense of satisfaction in seeing my article in the new Hebrew monthly "Bitzaron" which I received today. Tonight

I visted with the Tschernowitzs who had called together a number of people to signalize the issuance of the publication. There I met Touroff whose appointment as my successor I opposed last year. I was happy to find him very congenial and I volunteered to help him all I could with information concerning the courses he is to give.

* * *

Wednesday, November 1, 1939

At last I believe I have an apt analogy for the answer to the question that is usually posed: How can you speak of moral law when there are so many conflicting ideas of what's right? The answer is as follows: "The individuality of any phenomenon does not deny its generality. Each man has his own character, but all share in the psychological structure of human nature, which is at one and the same time both stable and fluid, both rigid and malleable." (Rosenthal)

* * *

Thursday, November 2, 1939

The mystic aspect of religion is that which helps man negotiate the element of uncertainty, insecurity and precariousness of which he is ever painfully aware. "Precarious originally meant dependent on the will of another" (precor=pray) and now by extension, dependent on chance or hazard...The strong man's hold on life is uncertain, the invalid's is precarious" (Dictionary) The derivation of "precarious" and the extension of its use have significant implications for the history of religion.

Precariousness exists in the a) physical, b) the social and c) the mental content of life. False religion seeks to overcome the element of precariousness without attending to the relationship of means to ends. Reliance upon wishing as self-fulfilling. True religion leads us to resort to intelligence which is the adaptation of means to ends and to identify that as divine and to accept

the residue as the domain of chance which godhood is ever seeking to conquer. Religious experience from the standpoint of the mystic consists in awareness of unity with godhood. The function of prayer and worship is to articulate and foster such awareness. The ?p.60 of this unity derives from the assumption that "the innermost nature of things is congenial to the powers that men possess."

The metaphysical function of religion is fulfilled properly when we recognize the creative function of mind in the very process of knowledge by which reality is mediated. "All synthesizing categories whether of philosophy, unified science or simple reflection have a religious quality."

I've just come from the examination of Henry M. Rosenthal which took place this afternoon at Room 311 of the Low Memorial Building. Besides Fries and Schneider under whom Rosenthal studied, the examining committee consisted of Prof. Lyman of the Union Theological, Prof. Parkhurst (anthropologist), Prof. Edman, Prof. Murphy (Psychologist) Drs. Randall and Guttman.

The hypothesis as worked out by Rosenthal did not stand up well under examination. The reason I was swept off my feet on my first reading of it was that it coincided with my conception of the relation of religion to culture, and for the moment I imagined that everybody would see the point. But as I read the dissertation a second time more carefully, I felt as all the other members of the committee felt that it assumed altogether too much and that Rosenthal didn't trouble himself to clarify some of the most disputed points.

I think that if Rosenthal had not made it a practice to avoid stereotypes by using abstract terms in unwanted fashion, but instead had tried to be concrete and simple he would have gotten much further

both in his thinking and his writing. There is a striking freshness to his point of view and at times an epigramatic succinctness -- as when he said today "We have stopped talking about God and we talk about religion"-- but there is hauteur about him which at times leads him to affect a certain obscurity in his style. In his hypothesis for example, he got himself all entangled by his use of the term "emotional system," which to this moment I still fail to understand.

The committee voted to ask him to revise his thesis and to reckon with the questions raised in the course of the examination.

* * *

Saturday night, November 4, 1939

Yesterday afternoon the three students of the Seminary - Goldberg, Wall and Szobel - whose turn it is to present their sermons in class, came to confer with me on the subjects which they are to discuss. Goldberg suggested the text (p.61) as basis for discussing the problem of what it is that has enabled the Jews to survive in their sojourn among other peoples. I did not approve of his subject on the ground that it belonged to the category of propaganda sermons which urged loyalty to Judaism which did not teach what Judaism was. Instead I suggested that he develop the idea implied in i.e. in the legalistic aspect of Judaism.

The discussion then turned upon the reason the students have to be coaxed into becoming interested in the problem of what to teach and preach. The three of them concurred in the opinion that the attitude of those in the ministry is largely responsible for the superficiality of the students.

This afternoon Baruch Zukerman, who represents the Histadrut, visited with us. After hearing what he had to say about the present situation in Palestine, I pointed out to him that unless the building up of Palestine would lead to the building up of Jewish life here, Jewish life will collapse here and Palestine might fail. Referring to the newly organized National Council of the four Jewish organizations, B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Committee, Jewish Congress and the Labor Group, he described the Jewish Congress as the one that should logically have functioned as a means of building up Jewish communal life. But with leadership like Wise's it is bound to remain a platform organization. He advised me to turn to the Bnai Brith as the organization that could bring about the communal reconstruction of American Jewry.

* * *

Sunday, November 5, 1939

At lunch today Lena happened to refer to the various levels of conduct, viz. impulse, habit and intelligence. (According to this classification, authority belongs to the level of social habits.) Thereupon Naomi popped up with the question: Is there anything to warrant placing sex tabus in the category of intelligence? To which I replied: There can be no family life without sex tabus. This led me to make the following point: As man becomes sophisticated he becomes unaware of the relation of means to such ends as he originally achieved instinctively in the same way as sub-human beings. When the end to be achieved is remote, there arises the conflict between the urge of the impulse and the remote purpose. Thus the mediation of knowledge, concerning the relation of means pursued authoritatively to ends felt intuitively, is the main cause of sin. This fact is basically the meaning of the story of the Fall. The knowledge of good and evil especially in matters of sex is the same of man's yielding to temptation.

Thursday, November 9, 1939

Last night I spoke at Israel M. Goldman's Temple in Providence. I had been quite reluctant to accept any lecture engagements this year, but I finally consented to accept a few in order to help cover the deficit of the Reconstructionist.

The subject I chose to speak on was "The Jewish Religion of Tomorrow." It is in line with the thinking I have been doing recently on religion in general. Finding that Judaism as a civilization has little chance of survival in America or elsewhere outside Palestine, I could not but feel frustrated unless I could find within my former interests some area which had a future. There will always be a need for religion as such, and the tendency to achieve true religion will never be downed. Whatever progress will be made in religion will be taken up by the existing cultures or civilizations, in accordance with their capacity to absorb the newer developments in the life of the spirit. The Jewish civilization would receive a new lease on life if it would accept the newer developments in religion. But I am afraid that Judaism is doomed. The rabbis have contributed largely to its moribund condition. I say this under the influence of the heartbreaking experience of last night at Providence.

There is a man like Israel Goldman. He is on the whole a nice chap and a hard worker. He is eminently successful in having built up a large congregation, a well attended Sunday school, confirmation classes, lectureships and social affairs. He takes an active part in all kinds of campaigns and drives, and probably speaks before the Kiwanis, the Rotarian, is in contact with the local clergy of the Christian sects. And what is the sum and substance of all his busyness? I found the answer in the hour I spent last night at the house of the president of his congregation, Judge Joslin, with whom I had dinner. There were his two sons and a daughter. The

conversation turned before long on the question why the children take no interest in Judaism. I happened to refer to Reconstructionism, assuming that he must have heard about it from Goldman. He hadn't the least idea about it. He is aman who has been president of the congregation ever since its inception, and Goldman no doubt had plenty of opportunities to discuss Judaism with him. But as a matter of fact, he probably never did. The very failure on the part of Goldman to have brought up either in pulpit or in class the subject of Reconstructionism, whether he agreed with it or disagreed, indicates that he has never informed his people concerning the inner problems of Jewish life and thought.

In spite of the fact that the Joslins had me at their home for dinner, not a member of the entire family, with the exception of Mrs. Joslin, attended the lecture. One of the sons drove us up to the Temple and drove off. All he wanted was that I should confirm the opinion, which he had been advancing against his parents and the rabbi, that Judaism is only a defense mechanism.

The lecture,for the good of my own soul, went over big, because I had had sense enough to work it over carefully in my mind while I was on the train - and the additional hour delay due to the breakdown of the freight train ahead of us enabled me to rewrite part of the outline. After the lecture, Mrs. Joslin mentioned to Goldman the fact that her children were bored by the High Holiday services. When I heard this, I said to Goldman "Why didn't you make use of the Shir Hadash (the book of supplementary prayers edited by Eugene Kohn)?" He answered that he himself read out of it some of the prayers. Then Mrs. Joslin and I urged that next year the book be supplied to every worshipper. At this Goldman balked and no matter how much we urged that the Shir Hadash be secured for the next year's services, he kept on saying "But there are reasons why it can't be introduced." I did not get to learn what those reasons were.

Yet I can't say he is an anti-Reconstructionist. After the lecture, toward the end of the question period, he made me explain what the Reconstructionist movement was and supplemented my remarks with the plea for 100 subscribers to the magazine. It seems that he is too superficially minded to realize the lack of cultural and religious content in the entire range of his activities and the unlikelihood of their contributing to a Jewish future. And he is certainly not among the least competent or successful among the rabbis. So what is to be expected from the poorer specimens among them?

* * *

Sunday, November 12, 1939

Yesterday I preached at the SAJ services on "Mysticism -- True and False." I gave the first part of the lecture I had given at Providence. I found it necessary to work it over in my mind again before I preached it, otherwise I am quite sure I would not have succeeded with it as I did. Anyone who wants to do good work must exercise considerable persistence and concentration. But I certainly require a great deal of both, if I want to speak or write effectively. My effort with a sermon is very similar to that with the bridge in my mouth. Whenever I have to put back the bridge I have to shut out all thoughts and to concentrate on the groove in my left molar. Otherwise I can't get the bridge into place. As soon as I get my mind focussed on the groove, the bridge clicks. That is exactly what happens to the sermon, if before delivering it I focus my mind on it. Isaac Eisenstein (Ira's father) as if he knew of this analogy which had occurred to me before I gave the sermon last Sabbath, said to me after the services, "This time it clicked."

Friday afternoon Bavli and Chertoff - members of the Teachers Institute faculty - came to see me. They told me that they and the other teachers had received each a $200 raise. Of this raise they were notified in an impersonal note by the accountant Block. This meager raise coming after five years of a much reduced salary, and after Finkelstein had led them to believe that he would endeavor to satisfy the teachers by rendering their salaries adequate, only deepened their resentment against him. The money used for these beggarly raises came from what Halkin had renounced by giving up ten hours of instruction. The classes had to be reorganized and each instructor has to teach many more pupils than in previous years. It is no wonder that the instructors feel that they are being wronged.

But what could I do to help them? I had to tell them that due to Finkelstein's intriguing, or to the complete reliance which Adler and the Trustees put in him, my prerogative to have a deciding vote in the budget and in the allotment of salaries has been completely nullified. I am a dean only in name.

* * *

Monday, November 13, 1939

Have I come upon the truth or am I deluded in believing that Reality is polar? It is both body and mind and couldn't be one without the other. It is both good and evil (p.64.) (

) He therefore is ever at war with himself. He prays to himself Since we exist in Reality or are part of it we too consist of good and evil and ever at strife with ourselves. (God prays with us when we pray to Him. God prays to God.)

* * *

Tuesday, November 14, 1939

God should not be equated with Reality any more than consciousness with Man. God is the positive pole of Reality. The positive in its striving against the negative hypostatizes itself, abstracts and becomes conscious of itself, in the case of man. Likewise the cosmic positive becomes aware of itself in its struggle against the negative. In man his cosmic positive finds expression in the awareness of God or gods.

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Saturday, November 18, 1939

Last Thursday night Dr. Tchernowitz and his wife visited with us. It was apparently not merely a return visit for the one we paid them recently on the occasion of the appearance of the Bizaron. He came to ask me I should talk to Sol Goldman and Louis Lipsky about getting the ZOA to subsidize his Hebrew magazine. He told me that Matz had given $2000, Salzman 500 and that Semel had promised to give and get and so far has done neither.

He has a journalistic flair but is entirely untrained in accurate or deep thinking. This makes it possible for him to be sincerely wrong on basic questions of Jewish life and belief. Hence his conversation while unrestrained and rather copious is to me entirely unstimulating. But the fact that I don't have to watch my words or strain myself to make conversation is sufficient to make his company enjoyable.

* * *

Saturday night

Last night Ira and I happened to be talking about the late Prof. Davidson. I was very much interested in what he said about him, namely that Davidson tried to imitate Schechter in many ways. He cultivated leonine hair, a twinkle in the eye and an everlasting

flow of wit. The discovery in the Genizah of the original writings of an ancient author - Hivi Al-Balkhi - might have started him off on this enterprise.

Rank - Illusion as essential to survival

Reading Rank's "Truth and Reality" has started me thinking on a new tack. It has dampeened my enthsiasm for Reason as the panacea for all our ills. What he says about the destructive tendency of self-consciousness when carried to the limit is quite convincing. Likewise is his contention that illusion is indispensable to survival. At least this is what I gather from his book. What he says seems to be borne out by ordinary experience. For one thing, art, for example, is inconceivable without the element of illusion. But we don't have to go so far. How odd and unnatural life would become if we were seriously to act on the truth that colors are not in objects. The blue of the sky, the horizon of the earth, the entire complex of experiences which are what they are as a result of illusion would disappear, if we were to insist on objective truth, and we would be far from being the better for it. What Kant designates as the dicta of practical reason, or what are commonly spoken of as "values" would naturally fall within the category of "illusion." This of course would apply also to the God-idea as it is meant to function in religion and not necessarily in metaphysics.

Polarity in rational interests

This brings up, perhaps, the most serious problem of human thought and conduct. There can be no doubt that the truth is to a large extent indispensable to life, and certainly to life at its best and highest. On the other hand from the foregoing it is quite evident that illusion is no less indispensable to life. It is apparent that we come here again upon the principle of polarity as a characteristic of life. But the question is: where shall we draw

the line between the areas where truth should function and thosewhich belong to illusion. The mere admission of illusion as necessary to life opens the door wide to all kinds of superstition and humbug. How is one ever to know what to do and what to believe?

Intellectual Conception of God

Let me try to state the difference between the true and the false conception of God, from the standpoint of the intellectual apprehension of that conception. Intellectually we should expect the conception of God to deal with the following: a) the nature of ultimate reality in relation to known reality, i.e. is it altogether the same as the latter, is it radically different from the latter, or is it neither? b) the relation of that ultimate reality to the existence of evil and c) its relation to the freedom of the human will.

a) Fate and mechanism identify the ultimate reality or God with what is. The dualistic religions regard the ultimate as the absolute antithesis of what is. Hence the otherworldliness. Either view leads to false religions. True religion identifies God with the process of growth or creativity.

b) From the fatalistic or mechanistic viewpoint there is no good or evil. From the dualistic viewpoint evil is an illusion. From the creationist standpoint evil is a phase of ultimate reality to be overcome without which there would be no meaning to life or creativity.

c) From the fatalistic or mechanistic viewpoint, there can be no freedom of the will. From the dualistic viewpoint it is a supernatural gift wherewith man is endowed at creation, and which as a rule he forfeits in the course of his earthly life. From the creationist standpoint, freedom is a progressive achievement of the human being, which is the functioning of God in man.

* * *

Sunday, November 19, 1939

Last night at Dushkins I learned that a Zionist had approached him with the request that he write a letter to the "Reconstructionist" pointing out that I was wrong in what I had said in my article on Palestine Jewry concerning Zionist responsibility for the failure to urge the reformulation of Jewish civil law, and about the prevalence of a chauvinist spirit in the schools. Dushkin hadn't read the articles, but he replied that he could well imagine what I had to say about the former matter and that he was in accord with my view about it. As for the matter of chauvinism he also agreed with me. To prove the point he told this Zionist the following story: In 1938 members of the vigilance committee of the Bet Hakerem community asked him to dismiss Anna Machlowitz from the Bet Hakerem school where she was teaching English because she was reported to have conversed with Arabs in the street and to have invited Arabs to her home. On investigating what had happened he learned that as she was one day waiting for the autobus she overheard two young Arabs speaking a beautiful Hebrew. She was so intrigued that she got talking with them to find out where they had learned Hebrew and she invited them to come to her home. The vigilance committee did not make the slightest effort to find out the facts but proceeded to charge her with being a spy and with trying to get Arabs to move into the neighborhood. A Jew, they claimed, should not be seen talking with Arabs.

Dushkin also told me that Ephraim Kaplan, the journalist who is paid by the Jewish Morning Journal to act as the watchdog of Orthodox interests, went to see Judge Rosenman to explain why he had written the article attacking the Committee on Jewish Education for the manner in which it went about in the management of the Friedsam Fund. In the course of the conversation Kaplan explained to

Rosenman that as a result of my teachings the students of the Teachers Institute become communists. What a skunk!

I went to see Dushkin mainly to discuss with him his "Memorandum on Establishment of a Model 'One-Day' School" which he had sent to me. He there points out that at present there are six types of schools which cater to the needs of different types of Jews. But there is a kind of Jew who refuses to send his child to any of the existing schools, and for whose child it is important to organize some kind of Jewish religious school if he is to take an active interest in Jewish education. Neither a Rosenman nor a Willen can be gotten to send his child to any of the existing schools, yet both want some sort of Jewish education for their children. They don't want the education to be doctrinal or normative but purely informative. The children should be taught Judaism in the same objective spirit as though they were being taught Buddhism. And of course it must take up as little time as possible. Alas and alack for such an education.!

I tried to discourage Dushkin from attempting to organize that kind of Jewish education. But I suppose he has to, if he is to keep these people interested. I certainly don't envy him his job.

* * *

Thursday, November 23,1939

Last Sunday night my sister-in-law Sarah Rubin died after a protracted illness. She took sick nineteen weeks ago and was able to last as long as she did only because of the extraordinary medical care which she received. This is the third death in our family circle within eight weeks.

She was a nice person, shy and retiring. Her interests did not range beyond her family and immediate relatives. She did a good job with her husband Max who like most of the Rubin brothers is an

odd sort of a person, and succeeded in making him something of a "mentsch." Of course he was an excellent provider to her and that contributed to her equanimity. People like Sarah and Max make good human material for a normal world of somewhat sub-standard intellectuality. By standard intellectuality I mean a comprehensive range of social and cultural interests. But they afford little help in times of social and spiritual crisis to those who are sensitive to a state of maladjustment and are eager to set things right. I do not say that everybody should have varied and wide range interests, although I suppose one does have a right to expect of everyone, who possesses considerable means beyond what he needs for legitimate comfort, not to be satisfied, narrow scope living. Such a person should be good on a large scale and not a small scale since society has been good to him and made it possible for him to secure the satisfaction of his needs and has entrusted him with large powers. Nevertheless I do not find it in my heart to complain against people of that kind, since they are on the whole harmless, at least directly. In fact, they would definitely refrain from doing any one deliberate wrong. The only thing I have against such people is that they want to be eulogized at their funerals. Perhaps if I didn't have to do it, I wouldn't have even that against them.

Monday night I had dinner with D". & Mrs. Karpf and Dr. Morgenstern of the Hebrew Union College. Karpf wanted me apparently to meet Morgenstern and express to him in person my approval of the amalgamation of the Graduate School for Jewish Social Workers with the HUC. It seems that both are meeting with considerable opposition and every little encouragement counts. In one of the recent issues of the Reconstructionist I had an editorial which was written up by Ira, hailing the prospective amalgamation. Both Karpf and Mor-

genstern felt that the editorial would contribute to the consummation of the project.

We had dinner at Trotzky's because they knew I would not eat anything but kosher. After dinner Kappf drove us in his car to his home on Central Park West and 108th (?) St. In the course of the conversation Morgenstern asked me whether my stay in Palestine had any effect on my views. All I had a chance to say was that it has led me to shift my interest from nationalism to religion. Mrs. Karpf then came out with the silly remark that in spite of any radical thinking I was still Orthodox in practice. This led me to give a lengthy explanation of my position. To prove how unorthodox I was from the standpoint of practice, I mentioned my eagerness to see the Sabbath moved to Sunday by means of a legal like moving the clock 24 hours.

A very important point, it seems to me, is the one I had occasion to make that evening with regard to the function of the social workers as a conserving factor in Jewish life. The synagogue cannot be maintained by people of limited means. Consequently people of that kind are bound to be alienated from Jewish life. The centers and even the philanthropic work done by case workers are the only agencies which can reach the Jewish masses. If we want to conserve Jewish life, nothing can be more essential than to have these agencies conducted under auspices that would imbue them with an affirmative attitude toward Jewish life. Hence the great importance of training social workers who are filled with zeal for Jewish survival and who have been trained to translate that zeal into a working program.

Last night I lectured at Har Zion synagogue headed by Rabbi Simon Greenberg. He is a peculiar type of individual. I have not been able to make him out. He is one of those who have not seen eye to eye with me. He is either by nature or upbringing too conservative-minded to find my radicalism acceptable. But being sincere himself, he respects my sincerity and being appreciative, he is grateful for whatever he learned from me. He is especially jealous for the centrality of the synagogue in Jewish life, and he feels that the effect of my conception of Judaism is to negate that centrality. In this he happens to be only half right.

Every since he has been cultivated by Finkelstein and brought by him into the Seminary Faculty he has naturally become even more alienated from me. Although I do not regard him of much significance from the standpoint of creative thinking, he possesses enough personality and administrative ability to cut an important figure in the rabbinate. For that reason he would be a strong asset in the Reconstructionist cause. For this reason I accepted his invitation to address his Men's Club Forum.

In the course of the conversation I had with him last night he expressed certain opinions about Jewish law which made me even more eager to win him for Reconstructionism. He said e.g. that he would favor an altogether different procedure in the solution of the Agunah problem from the one that Epstein was working on. His solution would include the insistence upon the Jewish court as the authoritative body to grant a divorce, but it would extend that prerogative to the point where it could grant a divorce to the woman as well as to the man. I felt on the whole that he had grown less conservative than I had known him to be in the past. But I am afraid that he would hesitate before he would take any step that might antagonize Finkelstein.

After I gave the lecture on the subject "What is True Religion?" I answered the following questions which were sent up in writing:

1. Does Jewish tradition conform with the requirements of true religion?

2. If God can be divorced from the supernatural, what becomes of miracles like those of the halting of the sun in its course, of the whale that swallowed Jonah, of Daniel in the lion's den? From the denial of these how far to the denial of (p.69)

3. Does God have definite form, according to Jewish belief?

4. Is there anything to the Orthodox belief that one's fate for the year is decided and sealed on New Year?

5. In view of the need of an enlightened religion, what should our attitude be toward customs which seem outmoded (riding on the Sabbath, kindling a fire, etc.)?

6. Will the "revised" religion require continuous grafting of modern interpretations on discarded concepts, or will it actually drop them?

7. We agree that the standards of religious truth must be continuously raised to keep pace with the advanced minds among us, but as these are always with us both "primitive" and "medieval" minds, shall we lose them?

8. Are we to tolerate the orthodox belief of Jewish religion which represents a very powerful force in Jewish life of the present day?

9. What do you mean by treating all human beings as equally made in the image of God? Do you mean that intermarriage should be recognized?

10. How can religion regulate human conduct?

11. If some religion other than the Jewish can establish itself on the basis of reason, what need will there be for the Jewish religion?

12. Why has history placed upon the Jewish people the burden of enlightening the world as to the essence of true religion?

13. What of those problems that reason cannot solve or explain, e.g. why do catastfophes occur or why are wars waged?

14. How can the average layman who has no special knowledge of the Jewish religion acquire it?

15. Doesn't the function of disseminating truth in religion fall primarily on the rabbis?

* * *

Wednesday, November 29, 1939

I don't know whether I am doing the right thing in assuming the responsibility for the Reconstructionist. Apart from the fact that I am not given adequate financial support by the SAJ under whose aegis it is published, I find it difficult to try to influence public opinion without criticizing adversely the many evils which exist in Jewish and general society. But the moment I permit any such criticism to appear there is bitter retort, and I for one am too thin-skinned to bear with equanimity any retort which is full of bitterness and hostility. The editorial in the most recent issue of the Reconstructionist, "Revisionism Redivides" has called forth a most bitter counter attack on the part of Louis I. Newman for which I don't blame him. But the fact is that despite his contention which he elaborated first orally when he came to see me last Friday and which he has formulated in the letter which he has sent in, as I suggested to him, he is wrong and the movement he heads is fraught with evil. Am I then to spend my days fighting revisionists? Or take the instance of the criticism of the N.Y. Times to the effect that it has never published in <u>full</u> any statement by a Jew dealing with Jewish matters, in the same way as it publishes in full every encyclical of the Pope. This criticism brought forth an angry reply from

the publisher Arthur Sulzberger, in which he charges me not only with being unfriendly but also untruthful. Yet he does not point to any full statement as ever having been published, but merely to the fact that statements by Weitzman, Wise and Einstein have always appeared in the times, and recently also one by Hore-Balish(!) Do I expect to get any satisfaction from a Jewish anti-Semite like Sulzberger? I don't enjoy the business of being a "man of strife and contention to all the earth." If I knew that it brought about a change for the better I would go through the business to the bitter end. From what I see of human life, however, it seems to me that there is no abatement in evil doing despite all the Isaiahs and Jeremiahs.

A little while ago Moss, the chairman of the United Synagogue and Samuel Cohen, came to see me. Sam Cohen did most of the talking. They had nothing specific to ask for, except that I give my moral backing to the United Synagogue. Apparently in addition to its intrinsic weakness it is now being set upon by Finkelstein and his adjutants - Greenberg, Arzt, Fischer, Simon, Elias, Margolis. What he told me about the high handed methods of lying and falsifying statements and records sounded very familiar. I recall the experience I had years ago with Finkelstein when Levinthal was president of the Rabbinical Assembly. Despite it all I am sure Finkelstein will play an important role in Jewish life. Alas and alack for Jewish life when a scheme of that kind comes into power. No one has yet answered the question (p.71)

While I don't attach much value to the United Synagogue and would not shed a tear over its demise, the fact that Finkelstein's tactics won the day is what hurts. About two years ago when Moss met F and Adler, F changed the United Synagogue with the following three sins: 1) It is secular, 2) it wastes the Seminary students'

time by having them edit the youth magazine and 3) it tries to win over the graduates of the Seminary by giving them banquets on the day of graduation.

According to Moss, F. maintains that the Seminary, which means, of course,himself - should have sole control over the congregations headed by its graduates. Even the various funds collected for such purposes as United Appeal, Zionism, etc. should go through its hands.

* * * *

Friday, December 14, 1939

It is only two weeks and one day since I last wrote in this Journal and already I find it so difficult to resume writing in it that I have a good mind to discontinue the Journal altogether. I am weary and disheartened. I do not see anything that gives any evidence of revival of Jewish life in America. I have no spiritual companionship of any kind. This last fact especially is eating me up. I am by nature so dependent upon stimulation and cooperation that I feel lost without them. And unfortunately the older I get the more lonely I feel.

The condition of my sister Sophie is heartbreaking. Her husband Phineas is highly eccentric, and yet he keeps on pestering everyone he can get hold of to help him get a position. Mother is as picky and as tyrannical as ever. Sophie's children are also peculiar. Her daughter Esther is married but that does not make her less a source of worry to her mother than if she lived with her. Her son Nathan has some government job in which he is not making out well and seems to be on the point of losing it.

Last Friday as I was trying to work out the sermon on ~~Spirit~~ Spirit vs. Might which I had to preach last Saturday, Sophie telephoned that Nathan was feeling depressed and that I

should intercede with Slawson of the Jewish Board of Guardians that he should give Nathan a job. I was so upset by the thought that the Israeli family would be deprived of the little support it probably derives from Nathan, and by this unfortunate assumption on the part of Sophie that if I really wanted to help Phineas or Nathan they would both be enjoying security, that for a long time I was afraid I wouldn't be able to collect my thoughts for the sermon. Especially now that I speak only once a month, I would not want the sermon I give to be a flop.

The sermon was rather successful. Yet when I changed it into a talk on "The Meaning of Democracy" which I gave Tuesday night this week, it narrowly escaped being a failure. I just couldn't let myself go. I hated the very idea of having to speak, knowing full well that there was no way of translating my words into action. This having to struggle constantly against the sense of futility and frustration means much tear and war on my nerves.

Abraham Siegel, one of the former members of the SAJ, died on Sunday in Florida. He was eighty years old. He had built up a large family of seven sons and one daughter and a large business - the manufactur of cigars - in which he had all his children working. He turned over the business to them about 18 years ago and he lived on the income he drew from real estate holdings. His interest was centered entirely on his family. The only sign of any outside interest I ever discovered in him was when after having been a member in the Jewish Center he left the Center and joined the newly formed SAJ. Every time I would meet him he would be rehearsing the story of his life and the wonderful family which he had succeeded in establishing. Not a single one of his children is identified with the SAJ. They probably wanted to escape his

domination by not belonging to the same congregation as he did. They certainly had very little interest in Jewish life and some of them were associated for a long time with the Ethical Culture group. Recently they became associated with Temple Rodeph Sholom which happens to be the nearest synagogue. They belong to it in a perfunctory fashion.

Having to officiate at the funeral of such a Jew is for me quite an ordeal. Yet this time I seemed to have done well. The dread of not doing well is so great upon me that I spend at least three to four hours thinking what to say on an occasion of that kind. The effort leaves me exhausted. And what is it all for.

Today there has appeared the article in the Hadoar entitled (p.72) I dictated the substance of it to a young man whom the Hadoar sent to me and some one worked it over into the polished style in which it appears in this week's issue.

If I had wielded a facile pen, what an opportunity for self-expression is afforded by the need of combatting the neo-obscurantist religion being preached by the "crisis" theologians like Barth, Tillich, etc. Their disparagement of reason and moralism and religion is a veritable menace. Once we begin to distrust reason and to exalt the irrational, there is no telling what madness may befall us. In this mad world the only possibility of remaining sane is to hold on for dear life to the last shreds of rationality and to combat with all of one's soul and one's might these new spokesmen of the demonic and the supernatural.

I forgot to record that on Thurs., Dec. 7 I gave a two hour lecture at Teachers College to about sixteen students on "Traditional Judaism and its Reinterpretation." Due to the fact that I make it a practice to distribute full outlines of the lecture I have no difficulty in holding the interest of the students, the majority of whom are gentiles, nor do I have to work very hard.

I cannot complain about my work at the Seminary and Teachers Institute this year. I manage to lecture with a good deal of gusto. But I am disappointed in the students of the Seminary. They are not the kind of men upon whom one may count to revitalize our people. I remember when I was a student I burned up with zeal to change things, to get our people to think honestly. So far I haven't discovered the least spark of zeal or eagerness or any sign of realization on the part of any student that there is so much that's wrong with us Jews. They have so many chores to attend to, mostly those connected with jobs they hold that they have no time to think or read.

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Midnight, Wednesday, Thursday, December 19-20, 1939

The last three days the going has been very hard. The students at the Teachers Institute, whom I taught on Sunday, the few directors of the SAJ who were present at the meeting last night to elect Poses and Daniel Rosenblatt as chairmen of the Society and the Seminary students I taught this morning, had this one thing in common: they all demonstrated that Jewish life in this country is very much against the stream. The students simply refuse to study and the laymen refuse to work for Jewish life. I got myself terribly worked up on Sunday and today lecturing the students for their lackadaisical attitude. And last night I was all atremble with excitement when I saw how the chairmanship had to go begging

in order to get young Rosenblatt to accept it. When I came to the meeting I found the few that were there trying to discover who is to blame for the defection of Semel and for the apathy of Joe Levy, as if the fate of Judaism hung upon these two men. It is quite apparent that young Rosenblatt's interest in the chairmanship isn't altogether (p.73) Hence the poor response to the call to the meeting made him hesitate whether he should consent to be chairman. The prospect that the chairmanship might bring him popularity or any similar advantage was under the circumstances not very bright. Nor can I say I was transported with joy over Poses' unhesitating acceptance. He strikes me as being quite crude in his manners. I hope that his morals at least are somewhat more sensitive and refined.

Tonight I spoke at the forum of the Flushing Zionist organization. My subject was "Jewish Survival in a World of Turmoil." I had worked quite hard in preparing the talk and in giving it. It went across, I believe, with most of the people there, though I suspect many wanted a Maurice Samuel kind of Zionist rouser. But at least this time the talk was not a flop.

The synagogue in which the forum was held is headed by Rabbi Dubin, who is a graduate of the Teachers Institute and of the Jewish Institute of Religion. Before the lecture he and Rabbi Sandrow, who was responsible for my having come out to speak, met at the office of the synagogue and talked Reconstructionism. Dubin remarked that at least two-thirds of the 60 graduates of the JIR are adherents of Reconstructionism, but they are disappointed that I am not doing anything to organize the movement. On the way home, whither he took me in his car, he reiterated the fact that the JIR graduates were hoping that I would inaugurate some kind of realignment which would make it possible for them to find themselves where they actually

belong. They are not happy in the Central Conference of American Rabbis with which they are affiliated. But they are prevented from breaking away from it, because a few of the more influential among them have been given positions of importance in the Conference. Basically it is the vested interests of the graduates of the different rabbinical schools that is in the way of their aligning themselves according to their real convictions. First comes the question what effect would joining another rabbinical body have on the chances of getting a position or making a change for the better paying job?

* * *

Friday, December 22, 1939

I look forward with considerable annoyance to the meetings of the Seminary Faculty. They all rub me the wrong way. Perhaps it is I who move the wrong way, thereby setting up electrical friction. I therefore solemnly resolve every time I have to attend one of those meetings to exercise all the self control I can possibly summon. If my nerves don't give way, which is seldom the case, I feel that day like little Jack Horner.

Everything went along smoothly at the Faculty meeting last Wednesday morning. I actually took part in the discussion and had no occasion to make any extravagant statement. When the item of the agenda came up in which the Faculty looked to me to make a report on the Homiletics suggestions that Finkelstein had handed to me at one of the previous meetings, I acted as if there was nothing to those suggestions and referred merely to the one suggestion with regard to the interval between the time the student read his sermon in class and the Sabbath on which he delivered it in the synagogue. All I said was that I had accepted that suggestion.

Finkey, however, thought here was an opportunity to score against me. After one of the sermons delivered recently a young lady approached him and asked him why it was necessary for the student-preacher to deliver a tirade against Chamberlain in connection with the present war. I calmly replied that I had asked the student to omit that part of the sermon and even had occasion to cross it out from the written sermon which he handed in later. Why it was necessary for Finky to try to embarrass me, by putting me on the defensive, he and the devil know.

Rabbi Arzt, formerly of Scranton, has been added to the Seminary staff in the double capacity of membership campaign organizer and lecturer on practical theology. He is not a bad sort of a chap; he has a good sense of humor and he knows a thing or two. He generally admitted to having learned something from me, but always made it a point like Greenberg to emphasize the fact that he disagreed with me on important fundamentals. This qualified him for Finky's retinue, and Finky has made sure that Arzt will be immune to the Reconstructionist virus by drawing him into his ambit and adopting him as a satellite. Finky is pursuing the same strategy with regard to Milton Steinberg, and probably by the beginning of next year Steinberg too will be revolving around Finky.

This Rabbi Arzt has been on my neck I should have a seminary membership drive in the SAJ. I sent out about 55 to 60 letters to SAJ people asking them to come to my house to discuss what was to be done in reference to the Seminary and the Reconstructionist. Nine promised to come and four actually showed up. One of them was Joseph Levy.

Joseph Levy called me up during the day. He said he wanted to have a talk with me, without others being around, because, as he put it, he didn't want to say anything that might hurt me or the SAJ. Since the meeting was not to begin till 8:30 I asked him to come at 8:00.

He came to complain against a statement that had appeared in the minutes of the previous meeting of the Board to the effect that Ira had stated that a prerequisite to my resuming my duties at the SAJ was active support of the Reconstructionist. Levy said that he as well as others resented my attitude. He felt, moreover, that it reflected a loss of interest on my part in the SAJ. This accounted according to him, for the general decline in the SAJ. Like most people who rationalize their viciousness, he is tantalizingly vague in his accusations and exasperatingly arbitrary in his interpretation of facts. I asked him whether he had in mind Semel's desertion of the SAJ. He said "Yes, Why should Semel have gone away from us. It was a great compliment to the SAJ and to you that Semel had chosen to become a member." And what he implied was that I was to blame for Semel's leaving the SAJ. He did state however that it was my business to ask Semel to come back.

I controlled myself and didn't tell him my opinion of Semel whom I regard as a (p.75) in the worst way. He didn't find in the SAJ enough admirers and flatterers. So long as J.H. Cohen was alive Semel stood no chance of being honored at the Jewish Center. This is why he hadn't joined it. Now he can be a great man there. Hence his heart has been drawing him to the Center for the last few years. But he never could quite make up his mind to break with the SAJ. Last year was his 60th anniversary, and the SAJ apparently took no cognizance of it. That apparently was more than he could bear, and so he has left it.

I took Joe Levy's "guff" quite submissively. I wasn't going to antagonize him by contradicting him because I knew how conceited and opinionated he was. I don't want the SAJ to disintegrate, and with Joe Levy alienated, the SAJ would in all likelihood go on the rocks. For Ira's sake I must keep that institution together. I was soon rewarded for my humoring Joe Levy. When he and I joined the other three who came to the meeting I had called, and I ~~xkx~~ asked those present to undertake a certain quota of the 100,000 membership campaign, Joe Levy accepted the chairmanship with a quota of $2000 above the present membership dues from the SAJ which amounts to about $1500.

Today I had lunch with Joe Levy and his son-in-law Finn at Longchamps on 5 Ave. and 12 St. In addition to repeating his complaint concerning the apathy of the older members and the poor attendance at our services, in comparison with that at the Jewish Center, he found fault with the Reconstructionist. After trying to get him to state specifically what he so resented in the Reconstructionist, he stated that the attacks on Hague, the Mayor of Jersey City, in the Reconstructionist of last year were out of place and unwarranted. Hague was, according to him, perfectly justified in keeping out the CIO from Jersey City. This meddling in controversial issues of our economic character is bound to do us Jews harm. An organ like the Reconstructionist should confine itself to discussion of matters of strictly Jewish concern. In the pulpit and in the Reconstructionist righteousness in general may be urged, but no stand should be taken on specific issues. This latter sentiment he kept on repeating again and again.

He said that union leaders had presented him with an ultimatum that he must give them $20,000 in American currency, if he did not want to have a strike on his hands in a few weeks from today when

the contract with the workers would expire. If this is true and the union leaders are really racketeers who are selling out the union then I cannot blame him for being bitter against the unions and resenting any attempt to take up cudgels in their behalf. Withal that I don't think that he has any right to dictate to me what to preach and what not to preach. There is no question that, under the guise of friendship, he wants to muzzle me, as did Joseph H. Cohen, Abe Rothstein, Ike Phillips in the Center.

All in all, I wish I could either grow cynical and reconcile myself to a career of lying and flattering and toadying for the sake of what the world calls success, and hate the whole damn brood of men and women who destroy my soul or have the courage to pay with suffering and death for the privilege of being true to my innermost convictions.

Is it possible that all the world and myself included are intrinsically so morally corrupt so selfish, so cruel as to belie the reality of all genuine goodness and kindness, in other words, the reality of God? (p.77) I confess that I feel very much depressed and hopeless about human life in general.

And why should I find fault with the world in general? In my own little family I see from time to time the outbreak of the most violent hatreds. Judith, Hadassah and Selma with their husbands were with Lena, Naomi and me at dinner this evening, which happened to be Lena's 55th birthday anniversary. After dinner we sat in the living room and enjoying ourselves over a silly little book that was put out by a daughter of one of the members of the SAJ. At about 11:30 Judith happened to drop some remark about Lena's having had to take care of Selma, when Selma flared up in a temper as though a thousand furies had taken possession of her, and screamed and cursed as though she were stung by a serpent.

In view of all these experiences I must admit that I find it hard indeed to keep on affirming that there is any worthwhileness to life. I find life to be a veritable hell, despite the fact that materially I am infinitely better off than probably nine-tenths of the people in the world. What then must it be for the nine-tenths?

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Saturday night, December 23, 1939

Yesterday's N.Y.Times carried an item about the motion picture reviewer of the Daily Workers, who had lost his job the day before because he refused"to mold his criticism of "Gone with the Wind" to fit snugly on the Communist party line." I quote this to convince myself that it makes no difference where and with whom one works; there is no such thing as independence of mind or interest in truth for its own sake. We are slaves of those who hold us in their power because we are slaves of the will-to-safety.

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Sunday, December 24, 1939

Religion has an intellectual as well as an emotional and an ethical function. Intellectually religion constitutes a specific type of approach to experience. The scientific approach consists mainly in investigating objects of experience to determine in the main the common denominator of various phenomena, classify them and to study the conditions under which changes in them take place, the relation between their qualitative and quantitative aspects and finally the order of sequence among them. The religious approach is concerned with the relationship of phenomena to each other as part of a totality or universe, and with their values or disvalues from the standpoint of what they mean to personality. The intellectual task of religion is to establish a true hierarchy of values and to dispel all false notions concerning reality which either tend to identify with it chance, or to regard it as dominated by more than one God.

An essential part of the intellectual function of religion is to formulate a workable conception of evil. The very identification of evil as such negates both chance and blind mechanism. On the other hand to assume the existence of an independent agency bent upon evil for its own sake is the extreme of absurdity. In the very assumption that this agency is bent upon evil is implied the priority of the good and its dependence upon it. Good by no means presupposes evil as evil does good. The absence of good is not necessarily evil, whereas the absence of evil is necessarily good, for existence per se is good. The mere absence of pain as ?p.78 contended, is pleasure or good.

The only possibility of accounting for the existence of evil is to regard evil as the negative pole of Reality. The polar character of Reality as a whole is as much an ultimate fact of experience as the polar character of electricity, which is part of reality. God is the other or positive pole of Reality. As far as we know itis only in the human mind that these two poles of reality are objects of awareness. Evil being part of the same Reality which is also good and like good being an object of awareness, is what makes it more than a negation of the good or what takes it out of the category of chance and makes of it a positive and therefore blameworthy factor. Disvalue is more than lack of value. It is positively harmful. It therefore falls within the scope of the good will or of God to bring it under control. Cf. God's praying (p.78) It is no wonder therefore that when the human being finds himself helpless in the face of overwhelming evil that he would prefer death to life. The evil by which one is overwhelmed is not only outside oneself but is also within one's self. Allowing oneself to be overwhelmed is experiencing defeat and the impotence of one's self. To be thus impotent is a living death. This is why complete death is then preferable.

* * *

Monday, December 25, 1939

As much as I was shaken by Selma's actions last Friday night at my house, so much was I heartened by Judith's coming with her Miriam to my house yesterday and acting toward Selma as friendly as though nothing had ever happened between them. When I see human beings acting rationally and kindly I am thrilled to the point of believing in God again. To me a simple act of forgiveness is a source of genuine religious experience. I don't have to resort to any such extravagant experience as that recorded in James' "Varieties" to come in immediate contact with that aspect of reality which is to one God. But the fact that such normal experience is to me significant of God is entirely the result of reflective thinking and of the rationative process. James is all wrong when he assumes that there is no element of the conceptual in all those identifications of certain experiences as divine, which he records in his book.

Apropos of the intellectual function of religion, what more important task can there be for religion than to build up that entire conceptual structure of thought whereby we can learn to think about reality from the religious point of view in an ordered consistent fashion analogous to that which we employ in our scientific approach. The fact that religion is not possible without some basic experience is certainly no reason for concluding that we can dispense with reflection and orderly thought to interpret that experience. Certainly science is meaningless without sense experience yet who would maintain that all we need is sense experience.

My ardor for communal organization - and for Jewish life in general - is all too liable to be cooled off if I were to allow myself to be influenced by what I have just been reading concerning the dissolution of the "Assembly of the Four Provinnes"of Poland in 1764.

I was shocked to realize that it was not the Polish Government that was mainly responsible for that dissolution, but the Jews themselves. They had shown a woeful lack of capacity for self-government. The Kabal had become so oppressive and arbitrary in its ruling that the people demanded its abolition or what amounted to that. The Kabal abused its power of taxation, granted it by the Government, to such an extent as to lead the Jews to pray the Government to be relieved of the authority of the Kabal.

What likelihood is there that, if the Jews in America had such a Kabal the latter would not abuse its power? The answer is that we have no right to expect the Jews to be better than their neighbors by and large. We must remember that the experiment in self-government carried on by the Kabal in 16th to 18th century Poland was bound to suffer from the influence which emanated what was practically from the worst governed country in the world. In America whatever abuses would exist, they would be no worse than those which exist in American government generally. That being the case, we must work with the principle that Jews are like everybody else, and if we believe in the worthwhileness of Jewish life it is not because it has individuality and all individuality is its own justification. This of course does not imply that we are exempt from bending every effort to render the worthwhileness of Jewish life so conspicuous as to be able to hold its own even in competition with other forms of national life.

I happened to come across in my reading today the following in the Responsa of (p.79)

What a pity that men of such native intellectual power should have been so obtuse!

* * *

Wednesday, December 27, 1939

I wish some one would write on Socialism as developed by Eduard Bernestein, Ferdinand Lasalle and Hermann Cohen and point out their ethical approach to it in contrast with the so-called "scientific" but actually power approach of Karl Marx.

A realignment of the rabbis which would make possible for those in sympathy with Reconstructionism to constitute a homogeneous and effective group is not feasible so long as the present rabbinical organizations control the placement of their members. The only likelihood of a Reconstructionist organization coming into being is when provision is made for the placement of men in positions where they can earn a livelihood. When Jacob Joseph Cohen, who was rabbi of the community in Scharigrad Podolia became a disciple of the Besht, he was compelled by the Mithuagolini there to resign. The Besht saw to it that Cohen obtained a position in Rashkov where he served for four years (1748-52). When Cohen had to leave this position too, the Besht secured for him another post in Niemirov. Idealism even when supplemented by belief in miracle-working cannot dispense with economic considerations.

I've read through the greater part of "Theories of Religious Experience" by J. M. Moore. He gives an excellent analysis of James' Otto's and Bergson's conceptions of religious experience. There is very little left of their theories after Moore has done with them. It seems to me that the very way in which they state their problem is all wrong. The very notion of trying to discuss experience of any kind apart from the object experienced seems ludicrous to me.

If we want to avoid treating the idea of God as the essence of religion because as an idea it limits religion to the cognitive type of experience, we should do well to treat salvation or self-fulfillment as the essential object or objective of religious experience. Such an object is necessarily comprehensive and inclusive of every phase of psychological reaction. The comprehensiveness of salvation gives a different significance to the various elements which constitute religious experience from what they have by themselves. Take e.g. the notion of fear. Otto struggles hard to distinguish between ordinary fear and religious fear, and comes to the conclusion that the latter is numinous fear. What this numinous object is he tries to explain. But as Moore rightly implies, were it not for the particular cultural background which Otto assumes, it would not occur to him to characterize the numinous as an object of religion. It seems much simpler to account for the unique character of religious fear by the fact that it is not so much fear of the object as fear for the forfeiture of salvation or its equivalent. Fear of a ghost is not religious fear, but fear that the ghost is an omen of loss of salvation is undoubtedly religious fear.

If the function of religion is to help the human being achieve salvation - and religion would then be the complex of attitudes, beliefs and behavior dominated by the purpose of salvation -- it is important so to control its emotional, intellectual and social functions that it will help the individual achieve salvation. What our religion is to be therefore depends upon our notion of salvation which is determined not by religion but by the social and cultural development. Nevertheless it is part of the intellectual function of religion to formulate a conception of salvation that shall be so integrally related to actual needs as defined by the current social and cultural conditions as to give meaning and direction to the

whole of a person's life. The main trouble with the historical religions has been that the conception of salvation which has come down from them is out of keeping with the rest of human life. Though they have not insisted that their traditional conception of salvation be taken seriously, they have not had the courage or wisdom to formulate a modern workable idea of salvation.

By this time the threefold function of religion seems quite clear to me. The intellectual function is to formulate, the meaning of salvation, the emotional to indicate the proper method of overcoming fear and the social is to arrive at a proper synthesis of individual self-realization and social cooperation.

* * *

Saturday night, December 30, 1939

Last night Lena, Naomi and I had dinner with the Dushkins. They had as guest Dr. Senator the Administrator of the Hebrew University. He arrived recently together with Schocken. After dinner he deliberately threw open the question: What are the prospects of American Jewry's contributing toward the possibility of Jewish survival in the diaspora? Dushkin, Honor, Hexter and I participated in the discussion. I cannot say that I found the discussion particularly stimulating. Out of the five of us only two - Senator and I - seemed to be like-minded. The idea which I developed as I spoke was the following: The fate of our people is integrally bound up with the fate of the rest of the world. We must therefore be oriented with regard to the general trend of world affairs. That trend is the result of the unprecedented technological development of the arts of peace and war which have altered the entire character of our material needs and the nature of communication between men and nations. The chief manifestation of that trend is the emerge of the mass man who is a different being almost from the common man of liberalism.

The very new character of the problem of Jewish survival is due to the emergence of this new human being, the mass man. If the Jewish people is to survive, it must reckon with all the implications of the emergence of the mass man. The most important of these implications is the complete repudiation of the traditional conception of salvation and of the means to it. No satisfactory substitute has been evolved. Neither the salvation of the communist revolution nor that of the fascist revolution can be regarded as holding out the promise of making life livable. It devolves upon us Jews to achieve a conception of salvation to which we can not only wholeheartedly subscribe but fervently dedicate our lives. That conception of salvation would thus be our religion. Insofar as it must make room for Jewish survival, it is bound to have vital connection with the best of our religious tradition and with the conservation of our national frame. Even in America the mass man is gradually coming to the fore. The New Deal, with the growth of government enterprise not only in public works but in industry, is the beginning of the reorganization of society on a new basis. This reorganization calls for a complete rethinking not only of economic, social and national problems but also of the future of historical religions and of the relation of church to state. Everything pertaining to human life and social institutions is almost in a hopeless state of entanglement and confusion. The utmost patience and the most thorough study and investigation as well as honest facing of realities are necessary, if we are ever to formulate the kind of salvation which is to become the objective of Jewish religion. (What I say here is an elaboration of my remarks last night.)

The one fundamental difficulty in the problem of Jewish survival in the diaspora is the fact that Jewish survival runs counter to the sociological principle that the spiritual as well as cultural life of a group must not be something apart from the ordinary every day interests of its members, but grow integrally out of them. In the diaspora their common every day interests are shared with non-Jews who are in the majority and whose cultural and religious forms necessarily predominate. In a New York apartment house with over 70 Jewish tenants and with Jewish ownership, the Christmas tree cannot very well be missing at this season of the year. How under the circumstances, it is possible for Jews to retain their Jewish individuality without a sense of difficulty which most people are unwilling to put up with, especially when there is nothing to be gained by it, I really cannot see.

Part of the general problem of Jewish life is the question of religious services which are coming to be less and less regarded as worthwhile. Once the theurgic conception of public worship is given up, no matter how beautiful or interesting it be made, it ceases to play an important part in a person's life. If religious services are to be judged by esthetic standards, they necessarily enter into competition with the manifold offerings in art, music entertainment and even when successful in this competition, they cannot be counted on to become a regular spiritual diet. The tendency to be fed up is one to which religious services are likely to give rise as any form of entertainment, even to the best.

Perhaps the time has come when we must think of shifting the center of gravity of worship from the public gathering to the home. If the family were to become the main unit in religious services, or the home the principal place for divine communion, the practice of

worship might be given a new lease on life. In general it seems to me that if we want Jewish life to survive within the present political and economic framework, it will be necessary to decentralize it in certain of its aspects as well as to centralize it in others.

In the course of my conversation last night with Dushkin he told me that Finkelstein has been trying to impress on Sol Stroock's son, who is now a member of the New York Committee for Jewish Education, that I am both a secularist and super-nationalist.

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Sunday, December 31, 1939

One of the ways of shifting the center of gravity of Jewish religion from the synagogue to the home would be to issue a book or books of home devotions. Eugne Kohn and I have done some work in that direction. We worked out a revised Haggadah which I put into Behrman's hands a few weeks ago. But Dina Behrman discovered that it was not up to the standard of what was expected of us. The revised Haggadah, to make an impression, would have to be poetic and much richer in content. I put in the greater part of a week's work on it again and Eugene Kohn wrote a couple of poems for it. But again Dinah Behrman pointed out that while it was a great improvement on the original text I had handed in, it was still far from perfect. I must confess that I respect her judgment in this matter, even though it means a year's delay in the publication of the Haggadah.

I have a feeling that in making the will to salvation instead of the God-idea the essential element in religion I am effecting a copernican revolution anabgous to that which Kant did in his theory of knowledge when it occurred to him to treat time, space and the logical categories as forms of the mind instead of as derived

from sensation. After he formulated his theory with regard to our knowledge of the world, he proceeded to apply the same method of discovering in the mind itself the forms by which it knows reality to the field of morality. There again he arrived at the imperative moral category which according to him, constitutes the form that the mind imposes on human relationships. Religion did not receive any special place in Kant's conception of the original nature of the mind. It was to him simply the moral law viewed as divine. It seems to me that this defect in his theory would be made good if instead of the moral imperative being regarded as a form of the mind, we were to regard as the basic form of the mind which operates in all matters of a practical ~~mxk~~ character, the will-to-salvation. The will-to-salvation is the will-to-live as it functions in the human mind. From a psychological standpoint, to be sure, the will-to-live expresses itself in the will to particular activities. But that should not prevent us from regarding all these specific expressions as manifestations of one underlying form, of which only man by dint of his power to think abstractly, can identify. In the human being the will-to-a desired end by becoming an object of consciousness renders the ends themselves subject to comparison. Thus ~~xrrx~~ arises not merely will-to-a-desired end but will-to-most desirable ends. This fact, when generalized, means that the human being as a result of his power of self-awareness or awareness of the ends he strives for, possesses not only a will-to-live but a will-to-maximum life, or life abundant. This is the will to salvation.

I suspect that Jewish monotheism is to a large extent the result of the native lack of capacity for abstract thought. Otherwise it is difficult to explain the insistence upon worshipping God only in one place instead of in many. There is no reason why the

altars dedicated to YHWH in the various localities in Palestine could not have been permitted to stand. The only explanation is that those who proclaimed the solity of God were unable to think of godhood as one under many manifestations.

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Monday, January 1, 1940 (Prayers should speak of God in third person)

Once in a while I get into a kind of praying mood. It is usually the result of my coming across some well-formulated modern prayers. It is never the result of my reading the book of Psalms. The Psalmist's enemies are not my enemies and he shouts so loud about his troubles that I can't make out what they are. I don't know much about Francis d'Assisi's prayers, but I have a hunch from the little that I do know about them that they would fit my needs much more than do the prayers of the Psalmist. But there is one point in which I would differ in the formulation of prayer from both and from most people who have written prayers. I would speak of God in the third and not in the second person. Buber to the contrary, notwithstanding. I regard the style of (p.84) as much more fitting for my conception of God than that of .

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Wednesday, January 3, 1940 (SAJ: The social reactionaries at the SAJ)

I somehow could never accept Karl Marx's version of what he calls the class struggle. All I could see was that there are people who have power and those who lack it, but the former exploit the latter, and are on the lookout for any signs of rebellion on the part of the exploited. But once in a while I cannot help being impressed with the reality of the class struggle. Ira and I have a difficult time with the few leading members of the SAJ because they sense that we are not in sympat y with the status quo. They sabotage the Reconstructionist because once in a while it comes out with an

editorial attacking some flagrant evil of the present social order. The following are instances of what we have to put up with: Jacob Levy at a meeting of the SAJ Board last year expressed his resentment at the editorial in the Reconstructionist which had made a plea for justice to Mooney. Harry Liebovitz, the most reasonable of our reactionary group, was finally convinced by me, in the course of the conversation at my house last Monday, that Jacob Levy was wrong, when I mentioned the fact that even the Atlantic Monthly had an article by Frankfurter vindicating Mooney. All the facts which pointed to the tissue of lies and perjuries that had been resorted to in order to convict Mooney had no effect apparently on Liebovitz. But my statement about the Atlantic Monthly (I'm not sure whether it wasn't Harpers that had the Frankfurter article) silenced all his doubts and convinced him that the Reconstructionist was justified in coming out last year with a plea for justice to Mooney.

Bernard Semel said to Liebovitz, "Have you ever read the Reconstructionist platform? It is anti-capitalistic." As if there could be nothing more criminal. This is the basis of all his fault-finding with the SAJ.

Joseph Levy stated to me at one of the luncheons ~~that~~ I had with him a couple of weeks ago, that the Reconstructionist had no right to attack Mayor Hague of Jersey City for keeping out the CIO from his city, nor to condemn the action of the Jewish Center there which compelled Plotkin to resign because of his having attacked Mayor Hague. Joseph Levy said that the Reconstructionist should confine itself to matters of direct Jewish interest only, and that in our preaching and writing we should avoid ~~it~~ dealing with specific evils, but try to uphold the general principles of ethics.

If the source of our knowledge of God is the will to salvation, the crucial factor in human life is our conception of salvation.

This conception is determined by the general status of our cultural development. But if there is to be any meaning to cultural development, if there is to be any standard by which we can distinguish between lower and higher values, we must assume an objective norm of truth and value. The assumption of such a norm and its imperative character are part of the functioning of reason. No matter how much reason is eclipsed by the drivers of instinct and impulse, its presence somehow does not fail to assert itself. It is the only hope of mankind, and to that extent it becomes an integral part of our idea of salvation. The violation of it in ourselves brings with it self-contempt. The highest conception of God, or of the power that makes for salvation is achieved when we consciously accept reason as the true law of our being, which gives us no rest unless it finds fulfillment in us. From that standpoint, I think that the Stoics and Spinoza achieved the highest conception of God.

Why some people demand supernatural sanctions

What place in the foregoing analysis shall be assigned to the kind of religion which takes shelter in authority because of its distrust of reason? Does not the fact that many who have been familiar with the functioning of reason have fled from it and its works, indicate that we are unwarranted in placing our reliance upon it and in making it the sole true revelation of God? The answer is that those who distrust reason really do not repudiate reason, but the various human impulses and interests that assume the guise of reason. Unfortunately pure reason is seldom given a chance to operate in our thinking. When people fall back upon the religion of authority, it is because they deem authority as speaking with the voice of reason. Of authority they feel sure that it is not colored by their personal likes and dislikes. They have little knowledge of the way authori-

tative teachings arise. Especially if they regard such teaching as supernaturally revealed are they prone to consider it free from all contamination of the subjective and the arbitrary. It is no wonder, therefore, that for want of a reliable criterion of the functioning of pure reason men have for so long hoped to find the only expression of true divine reason in some supernaturally revealed teaching.

At first sight it seems as though in the foregoing analysis we come back by a roundabout way to the rationalist approach to religion, or to the conception of God which is derived directly from reason. This resemblance however between the rationalist and the soterical (salvational) approach is only apparent. They are as a matter of fact, poles apart. Reason as part of the soteric approach to reality is ~~ex~~ even philosophically much better grounded in truth than when treated as an absolute standing on its own base, as it were. For insofar as reason is treated as an ultimate, the reliance on it is an act of faith. This act of faith then hangs in mid air. But by ~~xxxxing~~ treating reason as the direction in which man's will-to-salvation functions, the faith in it is an expression of that very will-to-salvation, which is the will-to-live as it manifests itself in the human being. The will-to-salvation is the will-to-live abundantly.

At this point I should like to define God as the postulate and validation of man's will-to-live (or will-to-salvation) according to the dictates of reason and conscience.

The manner in which the will-to-live or to-salvation operates shows that implied in that operation is the a priori assumption "that the human mind stands in organic relation to the universe and is at home in it." (Knudson, Personalism 271)

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